

Court Information Release



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Contact: Julie Hodek, Public Information Officer
United States District Court for
the Northern District of Illinois
219 S. Dearborn St., #2548
Chicago, IL 60604
312-435-5693

After distinguished career on federal bench, Judge Zagel assumes senior status

Chicago, Ill.- District Judge James Zagel will take senior status effective today. Judge Zagel has served as a federal district judge since April 21, 1987.

“He is one of the most respected jurists in the country. As an attorney appearing before him, you felt that whether as a prosecutor or a defendant, you would have a fair day in court,” said Chief Judge Rubén Castillo, who appeared before Judge Zagel when he was attorney.

On February 2, 1987, Judge Zagel was nominated by President Ronald Reagan to serve as a U.S. District Court Judge. Judge Zagel began his legal career as an Assistant State’s Attorney in Cook County in 1965. He then served as Assistant Attorney General for the State of Illinois. In 1977, he became the Executive Director of the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission until 1979. From 1979 until 1980, he was the Director of the Illinois Department of Revenue. He served as Director of the Illinois State Police from 1980 until 1987, when he became a district judge.

Nominated by Chief Justice Roberts, Judge Zagel served on the United States Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC, also called the FISA Court) from 2008 until 2015.

Judge Zagel appeared in two motion pictures and authored the fictional thriller, *Money to Burn*.

“We are grateful to Judge Zagel for his distinguished career as a trial judge for the Northern District of Illinois. We know he is looking forward to spending more time enjoying jazz, tennis, films, and spending time with his love, Peggy,” said Chief Judge Castillo.

As Judge Zagel assumes senior status, he and his wife, Peggy, hope to spend more time traveling together.

Beginning at age 65, a judge may retire at his or her current salary or take senior status after performing 15 years of active service as an Article III judge. Senior judges, who essentially provide volunteer service to the courts, typically handle about 15 percent of the federal courts' workload annually.

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